

## Regional COVID-19 Crisis Management Group

### Humanitarian Settings and Vulnerable Populations Working Group

## Health of Internally Displaced Persons, Refugees, Migrants, Returnees and COVID-19

*Situation Report #4|29 April 2020*

### Situation Overview

As of 29 April 2020, there are an estimated 171 238 reported cases (5.8% of the global burden) in all countries of the Eastern Mediterranean Region (EMR)<sup>1</sup>, with an estimated 7 148 deaths (3.5% of the global burden).

### Burden of COVID-19 among Refugees and Migrants

- As of 28 April 2020, there was 59 positive cases of COVID-19 among Palestinian Refugees registered with UNWRA: 4 cases in Jordan, 6 cases in Lebanon, 34 cases in West Bank and 15 cases in Gaza. It should be noted that about 75% of confirmed cases were detected among workers returning from inside the Green Line within the West Bank.
- Saudi Arabia Ministry of Health, on April 5th, 53% of confirmed cases were among migrants.
- Oman Ministry of Public Health reported 630 cases of COVID-19 among migrants and 2 deaths.

### Regional Response Actions

#### UN Refugee Agency (UNHCR)

UNHCR has launched a global fundraising campaign 'Every Gift Counts' to help raise funds for the most vulnerable refugees and internally displaced persons (IDPs) during the COVID-19 crisis. The global Ramadan campaign aims to raise additional funds to provide vital support such as shelter, food, clean water and cash assistance to the most vulnerable refugees and IDPs, including orphans, female-headed households, the elderly in Syria, Yemen, and Iraq in the Region.

UNHCR has launched Q&A: Access to health services is key to halting COVID-19 and saving refugee lives, <https://www.unhcr.org/news/latest/2020/3/5e7dab2c4/qa-access-health-services-key-halting-covid-19-saving-refugee-lives.html?query=covid%20cases> and has issued a press release drawing attention to the heightened risk of gender-based violence for displaced and stateless women in the COVID-19 pandemic, <https://www.unhcr.org/news/press/2020/4/5e998aca4/displaced-stateless-women-girls-heightened-risk-gender-based-violence-coronavirus.html>.

UNHCR has further reinforced refugee operations, identified potential surge capacities for advanced levels of care and supported health programmes as well as district and referral care hospitals. Global assessment tools and checklists of key indicators in public health and water, sanitation and hygiene (WASH) have been developed, a global dashboard on country-level preparedness levels has been created and a collaboration with John Hopkins University on forecasting modeling for different refugee contexts has been initiated. UNHCR has also been working on critical shelter activities that contribute to reducing health risks, including the planning and construction of isolation areas and medical facilities, the expansion of shelters of vulnerable households to reduce overcrowding and improve inadequate shelter conditions, the decongestion of human density in settlements to maintain social distancing and reduce transmission. A total

---

<sup>1</sup> The Eastern Mediterranean Region of the World Health Organizations include 22 countries including Afghanistan, Bahrain, Djibouti, Egypt, Iran, Iraq, Jordan, Kuwait, Lebanon, Libya, Morocco, Occupied Palestinian territory, Oman, Pakistan, Qatar, Saudi Arabia, Somalia, Sudan, Syria, Tunisia, United Arab Emirates, Yemen..

of 6.4 million masks, 850 000 gowns, 3600 oxygen concentrators and 640 ventilators have been procured by UNHCR and delivered to 25 high priority countries to support UNHCR's and partners' COVID-19 response in these countries.

#### World Health Organization (WHO)

WHO published a further guidance on *Preparedness, prevention and control of coronavirus disease (COVID-19) for refugees and migrants in non-camp settings*, [https://www.who.int/publications-detail/preparedness-prevention-and-control-of-coronavirus-disease-\(covid-19\)-for-refugees-and-migrants-in-non-camp-settings](https://www.who.int/publications-detail/preparedness-prevention-and-control-of-coronavirus-disease-(covid-19)-for-refugees-and-migrants-in-non-camp-settings).

### Country Response Actions

#### Afghanistan

In close coordination with the Ministry of Public Health, the International Organization for Migration (IOM) is initiating large-scale recruitment of screeners, testing teams and social mobilizers in four border provinces with Iran (Islamic Republic of) and Pakistan. In addition, IOM is coordinating with UNHCR, WHO and other partners to strengthen logistics, health screening, surveillance, and monitoring assistance in border areas in support of the government.

#### Djibouti

IOM Djibouti carried out a survey in the city of Obock in order to better understand the knowledge, perceptions and attitudes of local populations and migrants about COVID-19.

#### Egypt

In an effort to strengthen community-based delivery of basic psycho-social support to persons affected by the COVID-19 emergency, the UNHCR Community-based Protection team facilitated the first phase of the Mental Health and Psychosocial Support (MHPSS) training for community leaders and volunteers, drawing on the expertise of an UNHCR (MHPSS officer).

Under the Food Security sector, the World Food Programme (WFP) announced that, in response to the COVID-19 pandemic, unconditional food assistance will be extended to 120 000 refugees in addition to 100 000 casual workers, registered with the Ministry of Manpower from host communities who are facing unprecedented challenges in meeting their basic needs. WFP will also scale up assistance to 8000 of the most vulnerable pregnant and lactating Syrian women refugees and their infants under the age of two.

#### Jordan

UNWRA health centres remained closed, however, 15 health centres delivered noncommunicable disease (NCD) medicines to the homes NCD patients to cover their needs for two-month. Since the 28 March, NCD medicines were delivered to the homes of 58 846 patients comprising 74.0% of the total NCD patients at UNWRA health centres. As of May 2020, UNWRA health centres will provide vaccination to Palestine refugee children and as of 27 April 2020, UNWRA dental and medical clinics, as well as radiology centres and laboratories, will be allowed to reopen under certain conditions.

UNHCR health facilities have applied infection control measures and installed a separated triage area as a transit for suspected cases that will then be transferred to Mafraq hospital. Thermal screening measures have been applied at the gate of Zaartari camp. UNHCR is operating with a reduced staff in Zaartari camp but all urgent protection needs continue to be addressed and essential services including hospitals, clinics and supermarkets remain open. UNFPA is also providing quality integrated reproductive health care and Gender-based Violence services in four clinics in the Zaartari Camp.

### Lebanon

UNWRA health centers are open and have been equipped to triage patients separately that exhibit respiratory symptoms from those who have other medical concerns (NCD, maternal health, etc) and patients are required to make an appointment by phone before coming to the clinic. Health centres are thoroughly disinfected by environmental health staff at the end of each shift and are operating at a reduced capacity with a 60% reduction in visitors. The Sibli Vocational Training Centre is being prepared to be used as a quarantine centre.

### Libya

Mixed Migration Centre (MMC) is responding to the COVID-19 crisis by changing the data it collects and the way it collects it. Refugees and migrants report a wide variety of barriers to access to healthcare in Tripoli, including lack of information, discrimination, fear of being reported to authorities, arrest, or deportation.

UNHCR has distributed two prefabricated clinic modules, six ambulances, one generator, 395 blankets, 595 mattresses, 15 rolls of sanitary cloths, 751 hygiene kits, one hospital tent, 2820 bars of soap and conducted awareness raising campaigns across the country for refugees and IDPs.

IOM teams in Libya provided medical assistance to more than 1000 migrants stranded on the Tunisia/Libya border and continues to monitor the situation on both sides of the border in coordination with local authorities and partners.

### Morocco

Morocco introduced measures to help families and individuals working in the informal sector directly affected by the COVID-19 lockdown.

### Pakistan

IOM is providing technical support to the National Disaster Management Authority following the host government's request for support with COVID-19 response activities.

### Palestine

West Bank: All health centres and health points were opened except for the Biddu health centre and the Nasaria health points. The Biddu and Deir Ammar health centre staff continued to deliver NCD medications to NCD patients in their homes through the Biddu emergency committee and the village council. Each Thursday, women with high-risk pregnancies are followed according to pre-set schedules. About 75% of the COVID-19 confirmed cases were detected among workers returning from inside the Green Line.

Gaza: All health centres are working with prioritized (most critical) services and limited resumption of NCD services for the newly diagnosed cases and annual assessment of NCD patients. Home delivery of medicines to patients over 70 years old with diabetes continues and has reached 10 705 patients. Reporting on patients exhibiting respiratory symptoms has begun using an e-health system.

UNWRA conducted 121 home visits for disabled people and the health centres resumed registration of new antenatal cases as well as some urgent physiotherapy services.

### Somalia

IOM continued COVID-19 screenings at 40 health centres in the country as well as training health staff in Kismayo on COVID-19 symptoms for rapid case detection. In addition, IOM continued its support to migrants, particularly to the increased number of stranded migrants in Bossaso and its surrounding areas.

## Sudan

IOM Sudan installed five hand-washing stations at the quarantine centre in Omdurman, currently hosting Sudanese returnee migrants from Libya. Furthermore, IOM is supporting COVID-19 awareness and sensitization campaigns organized by the government, targeting the homeless and vulnerable communities across seven localities in Khartoum, using translated information, education and communication (IEC) materials in different languages (Amharic, Tigrinya, Oromo, Somali and Hausa). The awareness campaigns were conducted across seven localities in Khartoum and included distribution and installation of 15 portable handwashing facilities. In addition, IOM donated personal protective (PPE) equipment and IEC materials and coordinated the donation of two piston pumps to support the State Ministry of Health's sensitization and disinfecting campaigns to take place across Khartoum's public spaces (streets, markets, bus stations).

In East Sudan, UNHCR, together with WFP delivered two months' worth of food to some 44 800 refugees in the Shagarab refugee camps. WHO trained 36 rapid response teams (RRT) in four states hosting refugees and IDPs (White Nile, South Kordofan, East Darfur and North Darfur) and in coordination with the Federal Ministry of Health finalized the plan to expand and establish additional COVID-19 36 isolation centers outside Khartoum state and includes PPE and infection prevention and control materials.

## Syria

All UNRWA health centres are functioning normally. The Qaber asset camp remains closed and the health center staff are living within the camp in order to operate it. There is a marked reduction in the number of patients who visit the UNWRA run health clinics as only critical services are offered. Health staff from 12 health centres in the Damascus area continued distributing NCD medicines directly to patients in their homes.

## United Arab Emirates

The Emirati authorities have been testing and inspecting the workers residencies looking at engaging them more in implementing precautionary measures, cleanliness and sterilization of cooking places, dining halls and buses that were used to take them to their work sites. In addition, awareness raising activities were conducted and leaflets and videos in different languages on health and hygiene were distributed and shown. The Emirati government announced that they will cover all diagnostic and treatments costs of workers suffering from COVID-19 and the Emirates Red Crescent will continue to support those infected with the virus and their families as well as the families of those who died.

## Yemen

The Resident Coordinator in Yemen declared that Aden, Abyan, Lahj, Marib and Sana'a governorates and Sana'a City have been the worst affected by the flooding that has damaged roads, bridges and the electricity grid, and contaminated water supplies, cutting access to basic services for thousands of people. Conditions are hardest for thousands of families already displaced who have now lost shelter, food rations and household supplies.

IOM is working to strengthen the public health system in Yemen through provision of support to 41 health facilities in Al Bayda, Sa'ada, Sana'a, Al Jawf, Marib, Taizz, Al Dhale'e, Abyan, Lahj, Shabwah and Aden. Support to these facilities aims to enhance access to primary health care for migrants, IDPs and host communities in these governorates. These services provide the first line of defense to COVID-19 ensuring that the most vulnerable populations continue to have access to critical health care – disease prevention, hygiene promotion, case management and treatment, medicines – in addition to screening for COVID-19. IOM is in the process of providing additional screening tools (such as thermal thermometers), additional human resources, specific training for health workers, PPE, IEC tools to raise awareness of COVID-19 and its prevention.

In Amanat Al Asimah, Sana'a city, IOM is providing medical support to detained migrants at the Immigration, Passport and Naturalization Authority detention facility, scaling up support to prevent an outbreak of COVID-19. IOM has trained medical staff (Amanat Al Asimah, Ra'ada, Al Bayda and Shabwah) on COVID-19 case detection, referral, triage and prevention and has distributed IPC and IEC tools for use in reducing the risks of transmission. IOM has also established a triage point at the facility where all incoming persons are screened for signs and symptoms of COVID-19 and has delivered tents. IOM has supported two health facilities in Aden to initiate COVID-19 triage/screening points at their entrances. Along the Shabwah and Lahj governorate coastlines, four of IOM's mobile medical teams have integrated COVID-19 awareness raising into their activities with newly arrived migrants that they encounter, in addition to providing regular medical evaluation and primary healthcare provision. Mobile health teams providing primary health care and health awareness information to IDPs have traveled to 27 displacement sites in Marib, as well as to Al Jufainah.

In Marib, IOM is supporting the coordination and leadership in the governorate to expand health support to IDP sites and is working with the local authorities in the area to establish an isolation ward and isolation centre as well as one in Al Jufainah IDP site, in addition to strengthening community based approaches to detention, support and referral. IOM has trained hygiene promoters across Al Jufainah IDP site in Marib to ensure they are able to deliver critical messages to beneficiaries on COVID-19, handwashing and preventative measures as part of planned hygiene kits distributions and awareness sessions.

### **Way Forward**

- Ensuring that Universal Health Coverage (UHC) is utilized during the outbreak response for COVID-19 among all partners.
- Ensure continuity of care for non-COVID-19 essential health services in camps and camp-like settings.
- Recommend to all countries to support the duty of care to all refugees and migrants in their country and avoid any type of drastic action such as deportation.
- Activate the Taskforce on COVID-19 and Mobility/Migration under the United Nations Inter-Agency Issue-Based Coalition (IPC)
- Provide guidance to country offices on desegregated COVID-19 data where possible to identify reported cases among IDPs, refugees, migrants and returnees.
- Provide collective and timely information to our respective organizations on the situation of IDPs, refugees, migrants and returnees.
- Support Country Offices to develop guidance notes/briefs for their respective governments on COVID-19 as a whole-of government and whole-of-society approach toward IDPs, refugees, migrants and returnees.
- Ensure all UN strategic and policy level documents incorporate IDPs, refugees, migrants and returnees, using a whole of government and society approach.
- Promote the inclusion of refugees and migrants in all country level policies and strategies in line with the Sustainable Development Goals.

### **Contact:**

Dr Ali Ardalan ([ardalana@who.int](mailto:ardalana@who.int)) and Dr Tonia Rifaey ([rifaeyt@who.int](mailto:rifaeyt@who.int))